

Field Trip

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Summary: Buffy and the gang take a rather odd field trip not normally offered to students.

Field Trip

Buffy the Vampire Slayer and all its characters belong to Joss Whedon, WB, and the wonderful cast and crew of the show. I'm only borrowing them, and I promise to return them unharmed and not to make any money off of them. Feedback to betha@gwis2.circ.gwu.edu would be greatly appreciated.

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"Okay, am I the only one who thinks this is creepy?"

"Xander, we've spent I don't know how many nights in cemeteries or worse and you think **this** is creepy?"

Xander looked around as he hunched further down into his jacket.
"That's normal. But this...Will, this is just weird."

Buffy joined her friends in the aisle, scanning the crowd as she spoke. "Hey. See anything unusual?"

"Where do I start?" Xander coughed as Willow smacked him in the stomach. "Not unusual in the way in the way you mean," he amended once he caught his breath.

"You're sure there's a vampire here, Buffy?" Willow asked.

Buffy's eyes never stopped searching the convention center. "I got a tip," she said uneasily. No one asked if it was Angel, but the idea brought a momentary strain to the atmosphere.

Giles broke the tension, startling the group as walked up behind them and spoke. "It's really quite a good cover if you think about it."

"Yeah, you can get rid of all of the people you kill and sleep in a different casket every night," Xander remarked. "A vampire's dream."

Giles looked around. "Where's Cordelia?"

"Probably looking at dresses and trying to figure out why they're all split open down the back," Willow said.

Xander blinked. "All the dresses are open in the back? Why?"

Cordelia's arrival saved Willow from having to explain. "Interesting place you drug us to, Giles. Clothes you can't wear, cars I wouldn't be caught dea--uh, wouldn't ride in, and enough fashion disasters to keep Mr. Blackwell busy for a month."

"What's wrong, Cordy, couldn't get any of the salesmen to give you a free urn?"

"Shut up Xander. At least I got a free nail file, a comb and a mirror out of this."

Xander looked at her comb. "Do I even want to know what Chevy Chemicals makes?"

Buffy turned to her friends impatiently. "If you're finished shopping, can we get back to finding the vampire?"

Xander had the grace to look slightly ashamed; Cordelia just looked offended as she put her new possessions in her purse and looked around. "How do we spot them, anyway? I mean, it's easy in a cemetery at night when they do that ugly thing with their faces, but everybody here looks...well, not exactly normal, but normal in that icky business sort of way."

The other three teens stared at her, but Giles tried to answer her original question. "We're not really sure. We're hoping Buffy can sense them, but until we find out I suppose you should just look for vampire-like behavior."

"There's a kid climbing into a casket," Xander pointed out. "Does that count?"

"At this place? No," Buffy answered.

Giles looked around the room again. "We should walk around. Visit some booths. We're not very likely to find the vampire while we're standing in one place."

They began to move slowly down the aisle, trying to appear interested in the various items displayed. Several salesmen stopped Giles to pull him into a conversation about their products. He managed to get out of most of the discussions until one man, assuming the teens were Giles' children, tried to use them to get to him.

"So," he smiled at Xander, "are you following your father into the business?"

"Oh, I'm just dying to get into it," Xander replied. The salesman laughed as if he'd never heard the joke and Xander ignored the grimaces of his friends. When they were out of earshot of the salesman, Willow and Cordelia each smacked him. "What?"

"You keep making stupid jokes like that and we'll blow our cover," Willow said.

"I always make stupid jokes when I'm uncomfortable."

"You always make stupid jokes," Willow commented.

"Hello? Who cares if we fit in? I'm more worried at the thought of someone thinking my boyfriend would want to do this for a living!"

Cordelia's concerns were ignored as Willow gasped. "What is it?" Buffy asked, immediately assuming a defensive pose and looking around.

Willow pointed across the room. "That casket is made up to look like a cow!" The group stared at the object silently for a moment, then all of them except Willow burst out laughing. Willow looked traumatized.

"Willow, I don't think they actually bury anyone in a casket like that," Giles said comfortingly.

"But that's just sick," she complained.

Xander shrugged. "Face it, Will. We're not exactly at Disneyland."

Buffy glanced at Xander. "You seem to be much more comfortable."

"Well, once you stop thinking everyone here is watching you, waiting for you to die so they can pounce, it's not so bad. This might not even be such a bad career. Your clients can't complain, you'll never run out of business, and once a year you get to go to a place like this and get lots of free stuff." The whole group stared at him. "What? What'd I say?"

Buffy turned to Giles. "We need to figure out how we're going to spot the vampire."

"We could always commandeer the PA system and announce that there's free blood at the Columbo Insurance booth."

"Xander, shut up."

"It was just a thought."

Willow perked up. "We could walk around holding out crosses and see who cringes."

"And tell everyone what, that we're blessing the holy ground of the convention center?" Xander asked.

"Oh. I guess that would be kind of hard to explain."

"Why don't we just pull the fire alarm and see who doesn't run for the sunlight?" Cordelia asked as she checked her makeup with her new hand mirror. When no one commented she looked up. "What, I'm not allowed to make lame suggestions?"

Buffy pointed at Xander. "Find the fire alarm. Everybody else spread out, watch for the person who doesn't go for the exits. See where they go and wait for me to come by." Each person headed for a separate corner of the building while Buffy moved toward the center of the exhibits.

In less than a minute, the alarm sounded. "There has been an emergency reported in the building. Please cease operations and head for the nearest exit," the detached voice began repeating over the loudspeakers. Everyone began heading for the doors as Buffy turned around slowly, watching them leave. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw a figure dart toward the curtains surrounding a booth and disappear behind them. She pulled out her stake, raced over to the curtains and discovered a stairway going down below the main exhibit hall.

At the bottom of the stairs she looked in both directions, but saw no one. She closed her eyes for a moment and listened. A noise to her left caught her attention, and she ran in that direction. She hadn't gotten very far before the vampire jumped out of the shadows and attacked her, sending her stake flying.

They rolled around on the ground for several seconds before Buffy managed to kick him off of her and get to her feet. Unfortunately, the vampire now stood between her and her stake. He glanced at the stake behind him, then back at Buffy. "Poor Slayer seems to have lost her stake."

"That's okay, I still know where the casket is with your name on it." She rolled to the floor, aiming for the stake, but the vampire kicked it out of the way. Buffy looked around and pulled a large flag out of a nearby potted tree. She swung the sharpened end of the pole around and staked the vampire so hard that the pole stuck in the wall behind him. He disintegrated into a puff of ashes. She stared down at the scattered dust. "Guess you won't need the cremation option after all." She walked off to find her friends, not bothering to move the pole. No one was likely to think it was odd to find a pile of ashes underneath a flag reading "Welcome to the California Funeral Directors Association Annual Convention."

End
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